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ABSTRACT

This collection of materials provides guidance on the specific roles of teachers and paraprofessionals on instructional teams serving students with disabilities. Individual materials include lists, checklists, questionnaires, and forms addressing: a definition of "paraeducators"; roles of teachers; duties performed by instructional paraeducators; professional and ethical responsibilities of all paraeducators; basic strategies for clear communication between teachers and paraeducators; what paraeducators need to know about teachers; acceptable and unacceptable duties and responsibilities of the paraprofessional; an activity to help teachers and paraeducators sort out their individual roles; the teacher's work style; the paraprofessional's work style; a planning form for a paraeducator job description; a sample paraeducator job description; a sample instructional assistant job description; a sample agenda for weekly staff meetings; strategies for scheduling conference time; principles of giving and taking supervision; a sample observation checklist; strategies for scheduling observation time; on-the-job training planning guide; paraeducator training needs; tips for teachers and paraeducators who work as a team; a philosophy for the utilization, training, and supervision of paraprofessionals in education; ethical considerations for paraeducators; and factors contributing to burnout among paraeducators. Contains a short list of resources and additional authors and the address of The National Paraprofessional Organization. (DB)

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# ROLE CLARIFICATION: STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN THE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

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P. Mueller

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## PARAEDUCATORS: A DEFINITION

Paraeducators are employees: 1) whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other direct services to students and/or their parents; and 2) who serve in a position for which a teacher or other professional staff have the ultimate responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress.

Paraeducators provide services in the following programmatic areas: educational programs, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, early intervention and preschool programs, social work/case management, parent training/child find programs, transition training, supported employment or other vocational education programs, libraries, and health services.

## ROLES OF TEACHERS

Teachers are responsible for:

- ✓ Assessing the performance levels of students.
- ✓ Consulting with professional colleagues and participating in the preparation of individualized education plans (IEPs).
- ✓ Developing instructional objectives for individual students and the entire class.
- ✓ Implementing instructional programs along with paraeducators and other professional personnel.
- ✓ Evaluating the effectiveness of programs.
- ✓ Involving parents in all aspects of their child's education.
- ✓ Coordinating and supervising the work of paraeducators and other support staff.

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*Information in this handout is based on material contained in "A Training Program for Paraprofessionals Working in Special Education and Related Services." (2nd edition, 1990). New York. National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.

## DUTIES PERFORMED BY INSTRUCTIONAL PARAEDUCATORS

Paraeducators participate as active team members by:

- ✓ Instructing individual students following programs and lessons developed by teachers.
- ✓ Assisting with supplementary work for students and supervising independent study.
- ✓ Reinforcing lessons with small groups of students.
- ✓ Assisting with the preparation of materials for specific instructional programs.
- ✓ Performing informal and functional assessment activities, scoring objectives tests and keeping appropriate records.
- ✓ Assisting teachers in collecting and maintaining data about student behavior.
- ✓ Implementing behavioral management programs developed for individual students.
- ✓ Assisting teachers with crisis intervention and discipline.
- ✓ Attending IEP and other staff meetings at the request of a teacher or administrative personnel.

In addition paraeducators may be asked to: 1) perform bus duty; 2) supervise playgrounds and lunchrooms; 3) assist students with personal and hygienic care; 4) set up and maintain adaptive equipment and learning centers, and 5) operate office or video equipment.

## PROFESSIONAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL PARAEDUCATORS

A paraeducator must:

- ✓ Maintain confidentiality about all personal information and educational records concerning children, youth and their families.
- ✓ Respect the legal and human rights of children, youth and their families.

- ✓ Follow district policies for protecting the health, safety and well-being of children and youth.
- ✓ Demonstrate an understanding of the distinctions in the roles of various education personnel.
- ✓ Follow the directions of teachers and other supervisors.
- ✓ Maintain a record of regular attendance, arrive and depart at specified times, and notify appropriate personnel when they must be absent.
- ✓ Demonstrate respect for individual differences, dependability, integrity and other standards of ethical conduct.
- ✓ Follow the chain of command for various administrative procedures.
- ✓ Demonstrate a willingness to participate in opportunities for continuing education provided by the district.

## BASIC STRATEGIES FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARAEDUCATORS*

There are a number of elements that must be present in any situation to insure clear channels of communication. Some are commonplace and things we take for granted. If the members of the team are not careful and do not pay attention, positive communication can be inhibited. For example:

- The attitudes and feelings of both teachers and paraeducators need to be known, respected and understood. They need to deal openly with their attitudes and feelings toward their roles and duties, their attitudes toward the students they work with, their attitudes toward instructional styles and management and their attitudes toward the value of the other person's contributions. When feelings are not shared and openly communicated the nature of the relationship will not grow and the team will be less effective.

- An understanding of the similarities and differences among the people involved in the team must be recognized and understood. They may include different points of view about educational strategies, different values, different cultural and religious heritages, different levels of education and experience and other factors that can affect the working relationship.

- Teachers, paraeducators, and other education personnel should actively seek to develop and share a common vocabulary.

- Teachers must make sure that directions and expectations are clearly understood and that paraeducators have the information and skills they require to perform their assigned tasks.

- Paraeducators must be willing to ask for clarification or assistance if the assignment is not understood.

- Teachers should determine what special interests, talents, and training the paraeducators have that will complement and enhance their own skills and improve the delivery of education services to children and youth.

- The team must actively work to create a climate of cooperation, trust, respect and loyalty by meeting regularly to discuss procedures and techniques that will establish and maintain open channels of communication.

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*Source: "A Training Program for Paraprofessionals Working in Special Education and Related Services" (Second edition, 1990). Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School, City University of New York.

## WHAT PARAEDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEACHERS*

**TEACHING STYLES.** Teachers, like everyone else have unique characteristics and ways of doing things. These characteristics are rarely given much thought by the teacher because they are such an integral part of the individual's teaching style; but for paraeducators who are in support roles it is imperative that they know as much about these characteristics as possible. Without mutual awareness and understanding of how the teacher prefers to teach the effectiveness of the team can be undermined. Every teacher has a style of his or her own. The style may be flexible, controlling, permissive and/or a combination of all of these and more. Most teachers have an array of teaching strategies they like to use in a specific situation or with a specific student. They may be topic related, skill related or concept related. For other teachers structured behavior management methods may serve as the basic approach for teaching skills and helping students learn to monitor and maintain effective behavior. Some teachers may rely on self-instruction whereas others will rely on incidental types of learning centers or various types of group or individual projects. No matter what method a teacher uses, it is important for paraeducators to know what teaching repertoires the teacher has chosen and the reasons why they are used with a specific group or an individual student.

**SUPERVISORY STYLES.** Just as teachers have unique teaching styles, they also have distinct supervisory styles. One person may be very structured and provide specific directions based on rules, procedures, program and classroom structures developed by the teacher. Another person may ask the paraeducator to share ideas and information and participate in the decision making/planning process. Still a third person may tend to be non-directive and prefer the paraeducator to learn by observing what the teacher does and then model the behavior.

**DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES.** Discipline is for most teachers something that they hold very close and very dear to themselves. How they discipline and why they discipline is known many times only to them. It is important for the paraeducator to understand why one student requires one disciplinary strategy and another with similar behaviors does not.

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*Adapted from: "A Training Program to Prepare Teachers to Supervise & Work Effectively With Paraprofessionals" (2nd Edition, 1989). New York. The NRC for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.

**USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS.** Teachers, almost like good mechanics, have their favorite tools. In the selection and use of instructional materials, teachers very often will rely more on one type of material than on another, even though either one might work in the particular learning situation. Like discipline, it is important for the paraeducator to know why that particular material was selected and is of value in a particular learning situation.

**CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND RULES.** Both structure and rules are integral to the system of discipline and behavior management used in the classroom. Structure or a lack of it will very often determine the type of discipline that is used in the classroom. For example, an open classroom setting places considerably more responsibility on students to determine the course of their behavior than a very structured classroom setting does. The paraeducator needs to know why a particular structure has been chosen by the teacher, and why and how it complements the instructional delivery and/or processes.

The old adage that rules are made to be broken is not a procedure that is going to produce positive results in a classroom. The difficulty with rules is that some are formalized and written, other are informal and unwritten. It is the unwritten rule or unspoken rule that causes the most difficulty. Often times it is difficult for both paraeducators and students to comprehend fully what these rules are and how they are being applied.

## Figure 1

### Paraprofessional Acceptable and Unacceptable Duties and Responsibilities

Source: *Guidelines for the Training, Utilization and Supervision of Paraprofessionals and Aides.* Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Department of Education, 1977.

The paraprofessional may perform these instructional duties:

1. Assist in organizing field trips.
2. Read aloud or listen to children read.
3. Assist students in performing activities that have been initiated by the teacher.
4. Hand out papers and collect paper work.
5. Assist with supplementary work for advanced pupils.
6. Provide special help such as drilling with flash cards, spelling, and play activities.
7. Assist in preparing instructional materials.
8. Reinforce learning with small groups.
9. Assist children in learning their names, addresses, telephone numbers, birthdays, and parents' names.
10. Supervise free play activities.
11. Prepare flash cards and charts.
12. Prepare art supplies and other materials.
13. Hear requests for help, observe learning difficulties of pupils, and report such matters to teachers.
14. Score objective tests and papers and keep appropriate records for teachers.
15. Assist the teacher in escorting children on educational trips outside the classroom.
16. Assist in educational demonstrations for the class or small groups.
17. Support the teacher in the areas of sewing, cooking, industrial arts, and physical education.
18. Assist in arranging learning centers.
19. Provide assistance with individualized programmed materials.
20. Work with individual students or small groups on language development as outlined by the speech clinician.
21. Check attendance and permission slips and telephone absentees when requested by the teacher.
22. Help with inventory of supplies and textbooks.
23. Assist in decorating room, cutting mats for pictures, changing pictures on bulletin boards, and mounting pupils' work.
24. Type tests, bibliographies, lists, notices, class materials, dittos, and others.
25. Duplicate tests and other materials.
26. Check objective portions of homework, workbooks, etc.
27. Record test results and grades.
28. Keep attendance register.
29. Prepare routine reports not requiring professional judgment.
30. Keep all files current.
31. Perform routine telephone duties.



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**Figure 1 (con't)**

32. Deliver mail, records, instructional materials, and other items.
33. Collect and prepare records of money brought by students for various purposes.
34. Put work on chalkboard.
35. Order films and other supplies.
36. Make arrangements for field trips.

Instructional duties the paraprofessionals may not perform:

1. Be solely responsible for a classroom or a professional service.
2. Be responsible for the diagnostic and programming functions of the classroom.
3. Be responsible for preparing lesson plans and initiating original concept instruction.
4. Be responsible for assigning grades to students.
5. Be used as a substitute for certified teachers unless he or she possesses the appropriate substitute teacher's certificate.
6. Assume full responsibility for supervising assemblies or field trips.
7. Perform a duty that is primarily instructional in nature.
8. Be assigned to work with the most "difficult" students the majority of the day in a "babysitting-type" of arrangement.

Noninstructional duties the paraprofessional may not perform:

1. Shall not assume full responsibility for supervising and planning activities.
2. Shall not take children to clinic, dental, or medical appointments unless permission is granted by authorized personnel.
3. Shall not program and prescribe educational activities and materials for children.
4. Shall not grade subjective or essay tests.
5. Shall not regulate pupil behavior by corporal punishment or similar disciplinary means.
6. Shall not assign grades or other evaluation criteria to students' tasks.
7. Shall not be responsible for medical needs of children.

The teacher and paraeducator represent a differentiated team. Figure 2 highlights the differences in the roles of the teacher and the paraeducator in various aspects of the program.

# TEACHER/PARAEDUCATOR ROLE PERCEPTION ACTIVITY

This instrument is designed to assist the teacher and the paraeducator in determining areas in which they may have differing perceptions of their respective roles. Both the teacher and the paraeducator should independently examine each particular task listed and determine whether the task in one done by both the teacher and the paraeducator or is done primarily by either the teacher or the paraeducator. Indicate your response by circling the corresponding number. If the item does not apply to your situation, leave the item blank. After completing the items, transfer your responses to the score sheet for a comparison of responses.

| | Exclusively Teacher | Primarily Teacher | Shared Responsibility | Primarily Para | Exclusively Para |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Helping student get ready to leave | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Evaluating individual lesson plans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Planning group lesson | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Cleaning up after an art lesson | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Planning individual daily lessons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Getting children ready for an activity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Duplicating materials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Supervising playground activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Evaluating inservice training activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Asking parents about child's behavior at home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Planning weekly schedule | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Informing parents of meetings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Giving permission to observe students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Seeing that students stay at the lunch table | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. Assigning duties to volunteers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. Planning activities for entire class | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. Helping student feed himself | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Charting students performance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. Carrying out lesson plans | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. Discarding instructional materials as appropriate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. Asking parents to volunteer their services | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. Directing an art activity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. Accompanying student to special activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. Maintaining public relations with parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Answering observers' questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. Correcting papers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | Exclusively Teacher | Primarily Teacher | Shared Responsibility | Primarily Para | Exclusively Para |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 27. Conducting inventory of classroom materials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Constructing instructional materials. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. Planning room arrangements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Administering test to entire class | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Writing progress reports to parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Teaching an individual lesson | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Assessing the value of instructional materials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. Teaching group lessons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. Keeping daily attendance | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. Recording student grades | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. Planning inservice activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. Supervising student trainees (student teachers) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. Ordering supplies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. Developing IEPs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. Determining appropriate objectives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. Controlling students on field trip | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. Organization of materials in storage areas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. Consulting with professionals regarding a child's problem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. Reporting to parents concerning a child's progress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. Seeking the assistance of school supervisors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. Selecting field trip sites | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. Planning behavior management strategies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. Attending parent meetings | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. Handling a conflict with another classroom teacher | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. Helping child separate from parents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

# Teacher/Paraeducator
# Role Perception Score Sheet

Following each item, record the number corresponding to both the teacher's and the paraeducator's response. In the third column, record the value obtained from subtracting the paraeducator's response from the teacher's response. Record the sign as well as the value of the difference.

| | Teacher Response | Paraeducator Response | Difference (+ or -) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Helping student get ready to leave | | | |
| 2. Evaluating individual lesson plans | | | |
| 3. Planning group lesson | | | |
| 4. Cleaning up after an art lesson | | | |
| 5. Planning individual daily lessons | | | |
| 6. Getting children ready for an activity | | | |
| 7. Duplicating materials | | | |
| 8. Supervising playground activities | | | |
| 9. Evaluating inservice training activities | | | |
| 10. Asking parents about child's behavior at home | | | |
| 11. Planning weekly schedule | | | |
| 12. Informing parents of meetings | | | |
| 13. Giving permission to observe students | | | |
| 14. Seeing that students stay at the lunch table | | | |
| 15. Assigning duties to volunteers | | | |
| 16. Planning activities for entire class | | | |
| 17. Helping student feed himself | | | |
| 18. Charting students performance | | | |
| 19. Carrying out lesson plans | | | |
| 20. Discarding instructional materials as appropriate | | | |
| 21. Asking parents to volunteer their services | | | |
| 22. Directing an art activity | | | |
| 23. Accompanying student to special activities | | | |

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| | Teacher Response | Paraeducator Response | Difference (+ or -) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 24. Maintaining public relations with parents | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 25. Answering observers' questions | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 26. Correcting papers | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 27. Conducting inventory of classroom materials | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 28. Constructing instructional materials | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 29. Planning room arrangements | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 30. Administering test to entire class | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 31. Writing progress reports to parents | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 32. Teaching an individual lesson | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 33. Assessing the value of instructional materials | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 34. Teaching group lessons | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 35. Keeping daily attendance | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 36. Recording student grades | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 37. Planning inservice activities | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 38. Supervising student trainees (student teachers) | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 39. Ordering supplies | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 40. Developing IEPs | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 41. Determining appropriate objectives | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 42. Controlling students on field trip | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 43. Organization of materials in storage areas | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 44. Consulting with professionals regarding a child's problem | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 45. Reporting to parents concerning a child's progress | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 46. Seeking the assistance of school supervisors | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 47. Selecting field trip sites | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 48. Planning behavior management strategies | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 49. Attending parent meetings | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 50. Handling a conflict with another classroom teacher | ____ | ____ | ____ |
| 51. Helping child separate from parents | ____ | ____ | ____ |



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## Teacher's Work Style

Directions: Circle the number that indicates the level of agreement/disagreement with each statement.

| | Disagree | | | Agree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I like to closely supervise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I like a flexible work schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I like to let team members know exactly what is expected. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I like the para to choose his/her own materials. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I like to have a written work schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I like time to think ahead on the next task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I like the para to develop his/her own instructional methods. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I like the para to try new activities independently. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I like to give explicit directions for each task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I like to do several things at one time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I like a team that takes on challenges and new situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I like taking care of details. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I like to be very punctual. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I like to know frequently how I can improve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I like to bring problems out in the open. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I like to give daily feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I like to discuss when activities do not go well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I like the para to work with other school staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I like to encourage others to think for themselves. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I am a morning person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I like to speak slowly and softly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I like to work alone with little immediate interaction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I need a quiet place to work without distractions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



From: Piecing Together the Paraprofessional Puzzle. Carol A. Long, 1994. University of Missouri.

## Paraprofessional's Work Style

Directions: Circle the number that indicates the level of agreement/disagreement with each statement.

| | Disagree | | | Agree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I like to be closely supervise. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I like a flexible work schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I like to know exactly what is expected of me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I like to choose my own materials to use with students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I like to have a written work schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I like time to think ahead on the next task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I like to develop my own methods of instructing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I like to try new activities on my own. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I like to be told directly how to do each task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I like to do several things at one time. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I like challenges and new situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I like taking care of details. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I like to be very punctual. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I like to know frequently how I can improve. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I like to bring problems out in the open. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I like to have daily feedback. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. I like to discuss activities which do not go well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. I like to work with other school staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. I like to be encouraged to think for myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. I am a morning person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I like to speak slowly and softly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I like to work alone with little immediate interaction. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. I need a quiet place to work without distractions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Work Style Score Sheet

Directions: Transfer ratings from the Teacher's Work Style and Paraprofessional's Work Style activity sheets to the appropriate columns. If the ratings are the same or only differ by one, the teacher and para are similar on that item. However, if the ratings differ by two or more, they are not. Keep in mind on some items, such as number 12, differences can work to the team's advantage.

| | Para | Teacher | Similar | Not |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I like to be closely supervised. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 2. I like a flexible work schedule. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 3. I like to know exactly what is expected of me. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 4. I like to choose my own materials to use with students. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 5. I like to have a written work schedule. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 6. I like time to think ahead on the next task. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 7. I like to develop my own methods of instruction. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 8. I like to try new activities on my own. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 9. I like to be told directly how to do each task. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 10. I like to do several things at one time. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 11. I like challenges and new situations. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 12. I like taking care of details. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 13. I like to be very punctual. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 14. I like to know frequently how I can improve. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 15. I like to bring problems out in the open. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 16. I like to have daily feedback. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 17. I like to discuss activities which have not gone well. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 18. I like to work with other school staff. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 19. I like to be encouraged to think for myself. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 20. I am a morning person. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 21. I like to speak slowly and softly. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 22. I like to work alone with little immediate interaction. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 23. I need a quiet place to work without distractions. | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ |

## Planning Form for Paraeducator Job Description

**Position Title:** _____

**Position Setting:** _____

**Qualifications for the Position:**

**Purpose:**

**Duties and Responsibilities:**

15

**Orientation and/or Training Requirements:**

**Time/Hours Needed:**

**Duration of the Position: (minimum length of time for which the paraprofessional would be needed, i.e., semester, academic year).**

**Supervision Guidelines:**

**Reports to:**

**Evaluation Guidelines:**

**Salary:**

**Benefits:**

## PARAEDUCATOR JOB DESCRIPTION

**POSITION TITLE:** Special Education Classroom Paraprofessional

**POSITION SETTING:**
Elementary K-3
a. Special Education Classroom
b. Various K-3 Regular Education Classrooms

**QUALIFICATIONS:**
High School /G.E.D. diploma.
Good communication skills/ability to communicate effectively.
High degree of flexibility.
Calm and patient attitude.
Ability to take initiative when appropriate.
Genuine and sincere interest in children-especially those with special needs.
Ability to maintain confidentiality.
Ability to adhere to teachers directions and/or enact them in a timely manner.
Follow school districts code of conduct.

**PURPOSE:**
To empower children with special needs to be successful in all aspects of the school environment.

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

With assistance and guidance of supervisor, will help to develop daily lesson plans, which will address the I.E.P. goals of students.

Will implement and follow thru on daily lesson plans as directed by supervisor.

Work with students in small groups and individually; this will be done in either the regular classroom or the Special Ed. classroom.

Offer assistance to classroom teachers as time and conditions warrent.

Discuss confidential concerns in regards to students, parents, professional staff, with supervisior.

Confer with supervisor and professional staff on a regular basis in regards to students progress, I.E.P. goals and objectives.

Assist in implementing behavior management plans.

Assist in preperation, collection, and organization of Special Education classroom materials and equipment.

Do recess, lunchroom, and/or bus duties as assigned by supervisor or principal; not to exceed more

| | |
|---|---|
| DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: (cont.) | 2 duties per day.<br>Provide assistance to assigned students as required in areas of physical needs, field trips, assemblies or functions during school hours.<br>Attend parent/ teacher conferences or I.E.P. meetings when appropriate.<br>Maintain confidentiality in regards to student records.<br>Assist assigned students in the least obtrusive manner possible to participate to their full potential in the classroom environment.<br>Perform all other duties, as assigned by the supervisor, with proper training. |
| ORIENTATION/ TRAINING: | Minimum of 2 days orientation at end of August, or at time of initial employment<br>Attend all inservice/conferences/workshops as deemed appropriate by school principal/supervisor.<br>Reimbursement for a 3 credit, work related course per school year. |
| TIME/HOURS: | 6.5 hours per day. 32.5 hours per week. Hours can be extended if need arises. |
| DURATION OF POSITION: | 175 school days; orientation days (2); and/or any appropriate inservice days. |
| SUPERVISION GUIDELINES: | Meet formally with supervisor a minimum of 30 minutes per week.<br>Meet with supervisor and classroom teacher(s) a minimum of 30 minutes per week.(may occasionally) overlap with supervisor meeting.<br>Availability of a supervisor at any time during school hours should serious concerns or needs arise.<br>Availability of extra consultation time as required to enact necessary student programs. |
| EVALUATION GUIDELINES: | Performance evaluation to be completed by January 25th, using School Board format (see Section F of Employee Policies for Non-Certified Personnel.) It shall include a discussion by the supervisor of of the employees' accomplishments, constructive criticizm, and a plan for improvement. Each |

EVALUATION GUIDELINES: (con't).

employee shall be required to sign the evaluation. It shall also view Paraprofessional's performance as it relates to job description.

Ongoing input will also be provided and/or available during weekly meetings.

SALARY AND BENEFITS:

Minimum rate of $7.50 with annual increments of no less than 5%. Consideration will also be given for merit raises and continuing education.

Benefits will include the following:

5 paid holidays
6 sick days (cumulative)
2 personal days
2 professional days
Enrollment in the "Muncipal Employees Retirement Program".

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## High School

### Position Description

**Position Title**

Chapter I Instructional Assistant

**Position Setting**

Learning Center grades 7-12 with primary concentration on 7-9

a. tutorials
b. supplementary services within classroom

**Qualifications for Position**

1. Minimum High School Diploma or equivalent
2. Prior experience working with Middle School / High School students
3. Knowledge / or willingness to be trained in Child Development/Behavior Management Programs
4. Interpersonal communication skills
5. Demonstrate the following characteristics; dependable, responsible, self motivated, show initiative, maturity, flexible and adaptable
6. Ability to be a team member: work with students, parents, teachers and administrators in a professional manner

**Purpose**

To assist student, teacher, administration and family in making student learning a successful, positive, meaningful and enjoyable experience

**Responsibilities**

1. Instruct students in how to best use their text books; table of contents, glossary, index, key words, etc.
2. Help build student's confidence in his/her academic abilities
3. Help with researching
4. Be cheerful, treat all students equally, be firm, fair and demanding of their achievements
5. Check notebooks, homework, long term projects, to make sure students stay on task
6. Help students to prepare to be independent of Chapter I
7. Be available to parents, attend school open houses and parent conferences as requested
8. Assist with study skills development
9. Sit in on and/or furnish student information to Instructional Support Team (IST) as requested

| | |
|---|---|
| Responsibilities Continued | 10. Check CTBS scores for grades 7-9 to identify eligible students not targeted by guidance or team<br>11. Keep records in order to be able to report to Federal Government for end of the year assessment and compliance to Chapter I guidelines<br>12. Mentor/Supervise new Chapter I IA'S |
| Reports to | 1. Department Head<br>2. Administration |
| Duties | 1. Attend regularly scheduled department, staff and faculty meetings<br>2. Serve as a positive role model<br>3. Maintain Confidentiality<br>4. Attend Instructional Support Team, Basic Staffing Team, Individual Education Team and Middle School Team meetings for identified students as requested or supply pertinent information and materials<br>5. Attend all scheduled Inservice Days |
| Orientation and/or Training Requirements | 1. Inservice training for new employees<br>2. Familiarize self with faculty handbook and school policy and procedures<br>3. Reimbursement for work related courses that further education training (3 credits per school year)<br>4. Cooperation of school in granting early dismissals or paid professional days for education development |
| Time/Hours Needed | 1. Seven hours a day, 180 school days<br>a. included in this 7 hour day is a one (1) hour break to be divided into a 1/2 hour lunch period and two 15 minute breaks |
| Duration of Position | One school calendar year |
| Supervision Guidelines | 1. Communicate with supervisor/immediate superior as needed<br>2. Weekly meetings to voice and hear student/job related concerns<br>3. Required supervision time shall not exceed 30 minutes per week |
| Evaluation Guidelines | 1. First year Instructional Assistants(IA'S) will be evaluated 3 times; at the end of the first school quarter and at the end of each semester |

Evaluation Guidelines
Continued

2. Second year IA'S will be evaluated at the end of each semester
3. All other IA'S will be evaluated once during the school year
4. Evaluation Process
   a. evaluations will be completed by:
      IA (self)
      classroom/consulting teacher
      department head and/or administration
   b. copies of all evaluations will be distributed to all concerned and reviewed with IA
   c. There will be a period of 5 working days to discuss/contest the completed evaluation before it is signed and put in IA'S personal file.

Salary

District pay scale for all Instuctional Assistants based on credits/education and years experience

Benefits

1. Paid membership in Health and Dental Plans for self and family
2. 15 sick days per year cumulative to 65 days
3. 3 personal days per year non-cumulative
4. 3 professional days
5. Emergency days as needed not to exceed 3 days per occasion
6. Retirement Plan

## Instructional Assistant Job Description

TITLE: Instructional Assistant

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. A genuine & sincere interest in children.
2. A sensitivity towards students with special needs.
3. An advocate for educating handicapped students in the least restrictive environment.
4. The ability to work cooperatively with professional personnel in planning and carrying out assigned responsibilities.
5. The ability to receive ongoing training from & work under supervision of multiple members of an interdisciplinary team.
6. The ability to maintain confidentiality of student information.
7. The ability to accept delegated responsibility.
8. The ability to take initiative as appropriate.
9. The ability to adapt easily & maintain flexibility.
10. The ability to communicate tactfully with all students & staff.
11. High School Diploma.

REPORTS TO:

1. *Collaborating Teacher for issues relating to assigned student(s) Individual Educational Plan.
2. School Principal for issues relating to assigned students 504 Plan.
3. Reports to school Principal/ *Special Services Coordinator for all <u>other</u> non student issues.

JOB GOAL:

1. To assist in the integration of student(s) with diverse needs in the least restrictive environment, ultimately, so that they may be as independent as possible in the regular education classroom.

* Collaborating Teacher is new term for Special Educator
* Special Services Coordinator is new term for Special Education Director.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Willingness to receive training regarding student(s) diverse needs.

Specific Duties:

A. Participate in training program as directed by supervising staff and/or I.E.P. /504 Team as it relates to specific need of assigned student(s), i.e. physical restraint training, etc...,

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

2. Behavior Management.

Specific Duties:

A. Assists teacher in carrying out school & classroom behavior management plan as directed.
B. Promptly & consistently carries out goals & objectives of student(s) individual behavior management plan(s) as directed by Collaborating Teacher, Integration Specialist &/or Behavior Consultant.
C. Participates in behavior management training as scheduled.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

3. Carries out instruction effectively as directed.

Specific Duties:

A. Reviews student(s) Individual Educational Plan/ 504 Plan with supervising staff regarding student(s) individual needs & plans for implementing goals, objectives & accomodations.
B. Maintains individual data records/ files for assigned student(s) as directed by supervising staff.
C. Helps to organize/ prepare instructional materials as requested for assigned student(s).
D. Provides instruction to student(s) individually, in small &/or large groups by adapting daily lessons & activities according to student needs as directed by supervising staff.

Specific Duties/Instruction cont.

E. Assists in the supervision of student(s) as indicated in I.E.P. / 504 Plan during school related activities i.e. lunch, recess, art, music, community based training, field trips etc...,

F. Assists in ability awareness training for staff, & students in regards to assigned student(s) as requested.

G. Maintains ongoing communication with classroom teacher & other support staff regarding student and Instructional Assistant needs in the areas of changes in progress, student attitudes, classroom & tutorial performance.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

4. Cooperates as team member for student(s).

Specific Duties:

A. Participates as member of collaborative team to assist in the development & implementation of programs for children with special needs as requested.
B. Attends meetings to provide input as requested for assigned student(s). (i.e. I.E.P., Parent Teacher Conferences).

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

5. Contributes to educational environment of school.

Specific Duties:

A. Serve as a major source of information & help to any substitute teacher who is assigned in the abscence of the regular teacher.
B. Participates in school scheduled activities for inservice days.
C. Attends school staff meetings as requested.
D. Treats all students in a fair & equitable manner.
E. Maintains cooperative attitude/relationship effectively with the entire school community.
F. Provides classroom supervision when the teacher needs to be out of the room for a short period of time if the need arises.
G. Carries out other duties as requested by school Principal &/or supervising staff.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

6. Responsibility for implementing & monitoring school and RWSU goals.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES:

7. Performs such other tasks and assumes such other responsibilities as the Superintendent & Board may from time to time delegate.

TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT:

As described by the RWSU Board of Directors.

EVALUATION:

Instructional Assistant to be evaluated by school Principal in conjunction with Collaborating Teacher & Classroom Teacher(s) in accordance with RWSU policy on personnel evaluation. This evaluation will be reviewed with Instructional Assistant by supervising staff.

APPROVED BY: _____DATE: _____

REVIEWED & AGREED BY: _____ DATE: _____

ADOPTED BY _____ BOARD OF EDUCATION DATE: _____

## AGENDA FOR WEEKLY STAFF MEETINGS

Date:_____

Meeting Location:_____

Staff Members Attending:_____

_____

Staff Member (s) Assigned to Supervise Students:_____

_____

**********

DISCUSSION TOPICS:

| Next steps/tasks to be done | Person Responsible | Timeline |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

# STRATEGIES FOR SCHEDULING CONFERENCE TIME

STAGGERED BUS SCHEDULES

SPECIALS

INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

STUDENT TEACHERS

TEAMING WITH OTHER TEACHER

ADDITIONAL WORK TIME/COMP TIME

RELEASE STUDENTS EARLY ONE DAY WEEKLY

CHANGE IN DUTIES

REGULARLY SCHEDULED SUBSTITUTES

POT LUCKS

## GIVING AND TAKING SUPERVISION

### ROLES

Job descriptions differ from district to district but generally supervisor is responsible for training and monitoring performance of instructional assistants on a regular basis.

### EQUATION FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM

SUCCESSFUL WORK ENVIRONMENT =
GOOD RELATIONSHIPS + HIGH PRODUCTIVITY

### GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS

- Understand your supervisory responsibilities
- Demonstrate competence and job knowledge
- Be organized
- Transfer job knowledge to assistants through systematic training
- Supervise regularly, fairly
  - Even workloads across instructional assistants and yourself
  - Regularly schedule meeting times
  - Frequent direct observations
- Give constructive feedback fairly
- Invite input into program decisions
- Accept constructive feedback gracefully
- Practice what you preach
- Recognize accomplishments and give credit for them
- Maintain open lines of communication
- Use corrective discipline fairly and effectively

### GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANTS

- Understand your role and responsibilities
- Understand instruction, ask for clarification when needed
- Take pride in good work, point out successes
- Point out your problems, seek assistance for solving them
- Share your ideas and experiences so that others may benefit
- Abide by rules and policies set by supervisor
- Maintain open lines of communication
  - Ask questions
  - Make suggestions
  - Give feedback to supervisor
  - Request additional supervision when you need help
- Accept positive feedback and constructive criticism gracefully
  - Change your performance accordingly
- Tell your supervisor how you learn best
  - Verbal instructions
  - Written instructions
  - Modelling

**MAINTAIN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

- Giving positive feedback:

  Be honest and genuine
  Avoid sarcasm
  If you feel uncomfortable doing it, practice
  If not received often enough, people will stop trying
  If received too often or indiscriminately, it will not be effective
  Choose your words, avoid being condescending
  Can take many forms, not just "good job"
    Thank you
    That went well today
    The data looks good

- Accepting positive feedback:

  Be appreciate
  Practice if you feel uncomfortable

- Giving corrective feedback:

  Be pleasant and understanding
  Explain exactly what the problem is and why it's a problem
  Be sure the person understands what you are saying
  Offer suggestions for correcting the problem

- Accepting corrective feedback:

  Listen closely to the person
  Restate the problem to be sure you understand
  If you do not understand, ask for clarification
  If you agree with what was said:
    Apologize if necessary
    Ask for suggestions to improve
  If you do not agree with what was said:
    Say that you understand
    Tell your side with facts

Remember, if the person is your supervisor, you should accept this even if you don't agree with it.

Try really hard not to get defensive.

Stay calm and, if you are really upset, count to 10 before saying anything.

## HOW TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

- Establish and maintain morale

  Definition of morale: Mental and emotional attitudes of an individual to the tasks expected of her or him.

- Key job factors affecting morale:

  Full appreciation of work done
  Feeling in on things
  Sympathetic help on personal problems
  Job security
  Good wages
  Interesting work
  Promotion and growth
  Personal loyalty of workers
  Good working conditions
  Tactful supervision

Supervisors cannot assume that an instructional assistant's wants and needs with respect to the job are the same as his or her own. Research indicates that supervisors and subordinates differ substantially in key factors considered important by subordinate in relation to the job (survey results as example).

- Supervisors can improve morale by habitually following and practicing recommendations:

  Let each instructional assistant know how s/he is getting along
  Inform them in advance of changes that will affect them
  Utilize each instructional assistant's ability in the best possible way
  Make assignments and enforce rules fairly
  Use authority judiciously
  Involve instructional assistants in program decisions

## SAMPLE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

**Paraprofessional:** **Date:**

RATING GUIDE:
1 = EXCELLENT
2 = VERY GOOD
3 = AVERAGE
4 = BELOW AVERAGE
5 = POOR
6 = NO OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE

**EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Gives good/clear directions | | | | | | |
| 2. States clearly what behavior is expected | | | | | | |
| 3. Teaches sequentially | | | | | | |
| 4. Uses appropriate prompts/stimulates responses | | | | | | |
| 5. Measures performance against objectives established by teacher | | | | | | |
| 6. Provides reinforcement in a timely and consistent manner | | | | | | |
| 7. Uses praise effectively | | | | | | |
| 8. Maintains control of the classroom | | | | | | |
| 9. Uses a variety of reinforcers | | | | | | |
| 10. Uses materials effectively | | | | | | |
| 11. Stays on task | | | | | | |
| 12. Uses varied instructional activities suggested by teacher | | | | | | |

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

# STRATEGIES FOR SCHEDULING OBSERVATION TIME

INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPINGS

SPECIALS

USE OF VOLUNTEERS

INDEPENDENT STUDENT WORK TIME

STUDENT ABSENCES

PEER TUTORS AND PEER BUDDIES

TIME BUILT INTO SCHEDULE

TEAM TEACHING

REGULARLY HIRED SUBSTITUTES

**Exhibit 1**
**ON-THE-JOB TRAINING PLANNING GUIDE**

**Instructions: This document was developed to provide a systematic and accountable training program for paraprofessionals while they are on the job. The guide is meant to be an ongoing document for adding training goals and objectives to paraprofessional training throughout the school year.**

## ASSESSMENT OF PARAPROFESSIONAL NEEDS:

Interests:

New Assignments/Responsibilities:

School Policies/Assignments:

Skills (Classroom Management, Tutoring, Organization, Communication, Etc.):

## ANNUAL GOALS:

1.

2.

3.

| SHORT TERM OBJECTIVES | CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES | EVALUATION |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |

## PARAEDUCATOR TRAINING NEEDS

Please review the list of training needs below. Choose **only 5** of the possible training topics. Rank order them from **1** to **5** with **1** being of **high priority** and **5** being of **low priority**.

_____ Knowledge of child growth and development as related to students with special needs (normal and abnormal development).

_____ Managing students with challenging behaviors. Discipline/Behavioral Issues/Motivation.

_____ Strategies to accommodate students with different learning styles. Curriculum adaptation to include students in general education and community settings.

_____ Knowledge of laws and policies regarding the education of students with special needs and their families (federal & state laws, IEP process).

_____ Roles, rights and responsibilities of team members (classroom teacher/paraeducator/special educator/administrator). Role clarification - who does what, when and how.

_____ Collaborative teaming techniques (effective communication, conflict resolution, problem solving).

_____ Knowledge of specific disabilities (please list).

_____ Implementing health/safety/physical occupational procedures (seizure management, positioning, feeding).

_____ Speech/language/hearing (sign language, facilitated communication, in classroom support)

_____ Preschool programs (information specific to serving the birth - 6 population).

_____ Knowledge of laws and policies relating to paraeducators as employees (liability issues).

Other training needs and/or concerns:

_____

_____

_____

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS AND PARAEDUCATORS WHO WORK AS A TEAM

| Tips for Paraeducators | Tips for Teachers |
|---|---|
| 1. Communicate with the teacher(s) daily. This is essential in building a classroom community that is responsive to student needs. | 1. Provide an initial orientation to the school and to the classroom. |
| 2. Offer suggestions or ideas, but try not to take it personally if your ideas or suggestions are not taken. | 2. Familiarize yourself with the paraeducator's personal, educational, and experiential background. |
| 3. Ask the teacher's opinion on your performance. | 3. Create an atmosphere of acceptance and community. |
| 4. Discuss problems <u>now</u>. Don't let them grow by ignoring them. | 4. Introduce the paraeducator to the classroom routines and instructional procedures. |
| 5. Try to follow instructions exactly as they are given to you. | 5. Provide opportunities for the paraeducator to observe and participate in various classroom and extra-curricular activities. |
| 6. Remember all final decisions are up to the classroom teacher. | 6. Acquaint the paraeducator with relevant student information (i.e., records) and the manner in which they are kept, used, and maintained. |
| 7. Maintain confidentiality. | 7. Be certain to explain the confidentiality policy. |
| 8. Offer the teacher feedback. | 8. Treat the paraeducator as a valued team member. |
| 9. Let teachers know your strengths, talents, and areas of interest. You may be able to contribute to a special project or interest center. | 9. Develop a daily schedule with the paraeducator. |
| 10. Ask questions, the teacher may assume that you understand her directions. | |

<u>Adapted</u>: Stand By Me, Missouri Education Center.

| Tips for Paraeducators | Tips for Teachers |
|---|---|
| 11. Share responsibilities-- work as a team.<br><br>12. Be patient with yourself, with the teacher(s), and with the children.<br><br>13. Become familiar with every child in the classroom.<br><br>14. Become familiar with the academic approach in the classroom.<br><br>15. Become familiar with the materials used in the classroom (e.g., audio visual materials, learning center materials).<br><br>16. Have a positive self-concept sot that you are not dependent upon constant positive feedback from the children.<br><br>17. Mutual respect and support between the teacher and the paraeducator must be shown at all times.<br><br>18. Implement classroom rules with consistency.<br><br>19. Be prepared to give practical assistance (e.g., helping with teacher-made materials, dittos). Work as a team with the teacher.<br><br>20. Be a self-starter.<br><br>21. Don't be a complainer.<br><br>22. Be enthusiastic. | 10. Guide the paraeducator in attaining cooperatively established goals.<br><br>11. Provide the paraeducator with the necessary inservice and training that is needed to fulfill her responsibilities.<br><br>12. Provide the paraeducator with lesson plans.<br><br>13. Provide the paraeducator with frequent feedback.<br><br>14. Thank the paraeducator daily. |

Adapted: Stand By Me, Missouri Education Center.

## Philosophy for the Utilization, Training, & Supervision of Paraprofessionals in Education

1. The primary benefit of paraprofessional use in education is the improvement of instruction and services to children and youth.

2. Paraprofessionals continue to play a significant role in the delivery of instructional activities to students.

3. Teachers serve as instructional managers to in schools.

4. Adequate preservice, inservice, and on-the-job training protects students and maximizes the effectiveness of paraprofessionals.

5. The instructional outcomes in education programs are the responsibility of the teacher, not the paraprofessional.

6. Teachers require both preservice and inservice training to utilize paraprofessionals effectively. Training should focus on the role of decisions makers and managers in the educational environment.

7. Teachers play a significant role in contributing to policies concerning paraprofessional use, selection, assignment, training, supervision, and evaluation.

8. Education programs must be organized to allow for the necessary regular and systematic communication and supervision between teachers and paraprofessionals.

9. Paraprofessional programs are centered at the local educational unit level. Individual schools should develop specific policies regarding their deployment.

10. On-the-job training requires systematic planning. Supervision and evaluation of the paraprofessionals are essential.

Source K. Gerlach - Washington State

# ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARAEDUCATORS

## Accepting Responsibilities

- Engage only in non-instructional and instructional activities for which qualified or trained.
- Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, or others to your teacher or supervisor.
- Recognize that the supervisor has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and behavior management of children and follow the directions prescribed by him/her.

## Relationships with Students and Parents

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations, and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting.
- Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel, and only when students are not present.
- Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a student's handicap, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members.
- Present yourself as a positive adult role model.

## Relationship with the Teacher

- Recognize the role of the teacher as supervisor.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher.
- If issues are not resolved, then discuss concerns only with the teachers supervisor.
- Do not discuss teacher problems with students, other teachers, paraeducators or parents.

## Relationship with the School

- Accept responsibility for improving skills.
- Become familiar with school policies and procedures.
- Represent the school and its programs in a positive manner.
- When problems cannot be resolved utilize the grievance procedures outlined by the local school district.

Adapted from: Project TAP, University of Nebraska-Lincoln


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## BURNOUT AMONG PARA-EDUCATORS

### Why Para-educators Burn Out

1. **Inadequate Training**
In the majority of states, para-educators may be employed with little or no training. Most of the training that does occur is done on the job by the supervising teacher.

2. **Undefined Role Descriptions**
Lack of a job description is one of the most common problems experienced by para-educators. Too often, they are told informally that it is their responsibility to carry out the assignments of a particular teacher. Specificity is usually lacking, and this leads to questionable practices and eventual stress. Also what are they titled? (ex: Instructional Assistant, Para-educators, etc.)

3. **Misconceptions about the Roles of Others**
This factor relates directly to lack of formal preparation. Misconceptions about what others are supposed to do often leads to communication problems and misunderstandings.

4. **Poor Salaries**
This problem by itself may not be as serious as it initially appears, particularly as it relates to burnout. This is especially true if a career ladder concept is in effect.

5. **Lack of Career Advancement**
Only a few states have formally accepted the career ladder concept for special education para-educators. As a result, incentives for processional development are minimal.

6. **Lack of Recognition**
Being at the lower end of the employment spectrum, para-educators are often the last to receive recognition for their efforts. This can be a particularly sensitive issue when they are highly competent and are viewed as a threat by their supervising teachers. Most of their recognition rewards come directly from the children.

7. **Isolation**
Many para-educators reported that they feel isolated from the professional staff. Some stated they would like a "spot" (ex: desk, office, etc.).

8. **Stagnation**
Because of a lack of formal training, most para-educators are locked into their assignments for indefinite periods. In addition, the nature of their subservient role tends to discourage them from displaying creativity in many classrooms.

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9. **Poor Organizational Structure**
With paraprofessionals, this problem is most likely to occur if the "chain of command" is unclear. For example, when a problem arises involving two different supervisors (e.g., two teachers or a teacher and a principal), the para-educator may be unaware of the authority figure to whom he or she is responsible.

10. **Lack of Support from Authority Figures**
This factor closely relates to poor organizational structure and inadequate role definitions. It may also be experienced when an authority figure (e.g., principal, teacher, special education coordinator) fails to view the problems of the para-educator seriously or overrules them without proper deliberation.

11. **Lack of Communication Time**
There is little time in the day to meet with the teacher. Some para-educators report that they work the same hours as the students, which does not allow for ample time to communicate with the teacher.

12. **Lack of a District Evaluation Form**
How are they evaluated? Who evaluates them? What is the teacher's role in evaluation? Para-educators reported that they need feedback on a continual basis.

13. **There Are Few District Guidelines Regarding Their Role**
Example: No district handbook explaining their role and ethical issues. Few school board policies exist regarding the use of para-educators.

14. **Para-educators Report That They Are Doing Things That They Are Not Certain They Should Be Doing**
This goes back to clear role definition and the lack of training. Biggest issues here are behavior management issues and assessment questions.

15. **Lack of Written Plan From The Supervisor**
Without a written plan, para-educators reported that they were not clear on what they were exactly to do.

Adapted from
Burnout Among Paraprofessionals,
Frith, Mims
Council for Exceptional Child Teaching
Exceptional Children, Spring 1985
and interviews with 100 Para-educators in Washington State.



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## RESOURCES


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## THE NATIONAL PARAPROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION


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The NRC for Paraprofessionals publishes a quarterly newsletter, "New Directions" and sponsors an annual national conference. In addition, the NRC provides much of the research base for the field and has an extensive catalog of training materials and programs for paraeducators and their supervising teachers.